

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJ: PRESIDENT APPROVES KARATAS' DECREE

REF 75 ANKARA 9384

1. THE DECREE APPOINTING SABAN KARATAS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF TURKISH RADIO AND TELEVISION WAS SIGNED BY PRESIDENT KORUTURK JANUARY 18. KORUTURK RESISTED APPROVING THE APPOINTMENT OF THE POLITICALLY CONTROVERSIAL KARATAS AND REPORTEDLY RETURNED THE NOMINATING DECREE UNSIGNED TO THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS (REFTEL). HOWEVER, DEMIREL INSISTED AND EVENTUALLY KORUTURK YIELDED.

2. ALTHOUGH THE NEW APPOINTMENT REPRESENTS A VICTORY FOR THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT, AT LEAST OVER KORUTURK, IT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY PROMPT ANOTHER ROUND OF HOSTILE POLITICAL AND EDITORIAL CRITICISM. TRT HAS A MONOPOLY OF THE AIRWAVES AND THIS POTENTIAL FOR POLITICAL ABUSE AND THE NEED FOR IMPARTIALITY HAVE RESULTED IN THE ATTITUDE

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THAT A DIRECTOR GENERAL MUST HAVE THE VIRTUE OF CAESAR'S WIFE.

KARATAS IS CONSIDERED BY OPPOSITION ELEMENTS TO BE EXTREMELY CONSERVATIVE AND PERHAPS A FOLLOWER OF NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY CHAIRMAN (AND DEPUTY PRIME) ALPARSIAN TURKES. A SECOND LINE OF CRITICISM RESULTS FROM A COUNCIL OF STATE (DANISTAY) RULING THAT FORMER DIRECTOR ISMAIL CEM IPEKCI (AN ECEVIT APPOINTEE) HAD BEEN ILLEGALLY REMOVED FROM HIS POSITION. ALTHOUGH THE IMMEDIATE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF THAT RULING IS SLIGHT, THE THRUST OF THE CRITICISM IS THAT NO ONE SHOULD BE APPOINTED UNTIL THE CEM MATTER IS ULTIMATELY RESOLVED.

3. INITIAL HOSTILE RESPONSE TO THE KARATAS DECREE INTERESTINGLY HAS BEEN DIRECTED NOT AGAINST DEMIREL FOR NOMINATING HIM, BUT TOWARD KORUTURK FOR RELENTING AND SIGNING THE DECREE:

A. REPUBLIC PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) CHAIRMAN ECEVIT, WHO HAS HAD AN APPARENTLY CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH KORUTURK, STATED JANUARY 19 THAT "THE DEMOCRATIC STATE RULES BY LAW HAS BEEN DEALT YET ANOTHER BLOW AND IT IS A PITY THAT THIS TIME IT IS BY THE HAND OF THE PRESIDENT." ECEVIT CHARGED THAT KORUTURK'S "IMPARTIALITY" WAS NOT SUBJECT TO QUESTION AND CITED AS FURTHER EVIDENCE THE FACT THAT IN AN AUGUST VISIT TO THE BLACK SEA DURING THE SENATE ELECTION PERIOD, KORUTURK MADE SPEECHES WHICH "SHOWED THAT HE WAS BIASED" IN FAVOR OF THE GOVERNMENT. (COMMENT: DURING THE BLACK SEA TOUR, KORUTURK MADE SEVERAL SPEECHES PRAISING THE OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTH OF TURKEY.)

B. THE LIFE SENATORS GROUP (FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL UNITY WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT THE 1960 REVOLUTION) LABELLED THE PRESIDENT'S ENDORSEMENT OF THE KARATAS DECREE IN VIEW OF THE NEGATIVE DANISTAY RULING AS A "VIOLATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF A STATE RULED BY LAW."

4. COMMENT: THE KARATAS APPOINTMENT WILL PROVIDE THE RPP WITH ADDITIONAL AMMUNITION IN ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE "ILLEGALITIES" OF THE DEMIREL ADMINISTRATION.

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THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION IS, AS NOTED EARLIER, A VICTORY FOR DEMIREL, AND IT IS PROBABLY ECEVIT'S FRUSTRATION AT THIS THAT EXPLAINS HIS HIGHLY UNUSUAL ATTACK ON THE PRESIDENT, A MAN TRADITIONALLY CONSIDERED ABOVE POLITICS.
MACOMBER

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